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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000244

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DOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KBURRESS
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STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR LFITT, PMARIN
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER

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TAGS: PGOV PREL EPET KDEM NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NIGER DELTA MILITANTS LEARN NON-VIOLENT PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE FROM U.S. TRAINERS

Classified By: Consul General Donna Blair, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary: U.S. scholar Dr. Bernard LaFayette led training in the principles and practice of nonviolence for 600 Niger Delta militants; the training was sponsored by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) through Nigeria's Foundation for Ethnic Harmony (FEHN). Sheriff Mulade, National President of the Gbaramatu Youth Council, and Chris Ekiyor, President of the Ijaw Youth Council, both participants in prior trainings conducted by Dr. LaFayette, have changed their organizations into advocates for nonviolence, Allen Onyema Director of FEHN told Acting Consul General. Sheriff Mulade, who recently returned from an International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), also recruits participants from militant camps for the trainings. The Vanguard newspaper reported training participants were drawn from the camps of Government Tom Polo, Farrah Dagogo, Soboma George, Ateke Tom, and Prince Idol. Dr. LaFayette was here under a martin luther King associate program sponsored by the Foundation for Ethnic harmony (FEHN). End Summary.

Former Militant Recruits for Non-Violence Trainings

¶2. (C) Acting Consul General met July 4 with Gbaramatu Youth Council (GYC) National President Sheriff Mulade (protect throughout). Mulade, in Lagos to attend a segment of a training in non-violence for 600 former Niger Delta militants seeking to give up the militant life, said that the training is funded by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and conducted by the Foundation for Ethnic Harmony in Nigeria (FEHN) with U.S. trainers from the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies at the University of Rhode Island. He himself was once a militant leader, he acknowledged, and after participating in the non-violence training built on Dr. Martin Luther King's principles in 2006, he has helped to enroll other militants in the course. (Note: The Gbaramatu Kingdom includes the area around the Chevron Escravos oil facility. End Note)

¶3. (C) Mulade said he had encountered one problem with this training; he had given Dokubo Asari's camp (Asari is a Niger

Delta militant released in 2007 by the then new Yar'Adua government to show goodwill in an effort to resolve the Niger Delta crisis) a number of slots in the training, and Asari filled some of them with his friends, including some girlfriends. (Note: The Sunday, July 6 Vanguard reported on testimonials presented at the graduation ceremony of 75 youths participating in one segment of the training. The youths were drawn from the Government Tom Polo camp, from the Mebutu camp, from the Highest Barracks camp of Farrah Dagogo, from the ZZ Barracks of Soboma George, from the Angola camp of Ateke Tom, and from the Prince Idol camp, the paper reported. End Note)

Martin Luther King Associate Conducts Trainings

¶4. (C) Acting Consul General met July 5 with Allen Onyema, Managing Director of the Foundation for Ethnic Harmony (FEHN); with Joy Imoli, FEHN Public Relations Officer; with Dr. Bernard LaFayette, Jr., Director of the University of Rhode Island's Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies; and three additional American trainers from the Rhode Island Center. The militants want to give up violence, Onyema said.

To help them convert to non-violence, FEHN has, since 2006, worked with Dr. LaFayette to conduct trainings in the principles and practice of nonviolence. Both Chris Ekiyor, the head of a powerful Ijaw group, the Ijaw Youth Council, and Sheriff Mulade, the head of the Gbaramatu Youth Council, formerly militant leaders steeped in violence took earlier trainings conducted by Dr. LaFayette through FEHN; both leaders are committed to nonviolence and have changed the

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direction of the organizations they lead, Onyema said.

¶5. (SBU) Training is conducted in two parts. First, groups of Niger Delta youths undergo a week-long training in nonviolence principles in Lagos. To help participants maintain concentration, the youths are housed at the Eko Resort on the Lekki Peninsula, a self-contained compound. Following the Lagos portion of the training, the former militants participate in a second week of training in South Africa. This helps them to gain perspective by dealing with individuals involved in another nonviolent struggle, Onyema said. In the course of the training, individuals themselves are changed into teachers, Dr. LaFayette said. In the current training, because many participants were illiterate, the course relied heavily on oral communication of study materials. Youths helped others to master the material and to study for the exams, Dr. LaFayette said.

¶6. (SBU) Onyema noted that the first training was sponsored by Shell, after which Chevron sponsored a training. While Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Victor Attah sponsored 100 youths from the state for participation in the program. The current training, for 600 youths over a period of several weeks, is sponsored by NDDC, Onyema said. FEHN plans to set up nonviolence training centers in each state, beginning with the core Niger Delta states of Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers. To staff these centers, FEHN will sponsor community leaders, lawyers and others selected to work with the centers, for additional training directed by Dr. LaFayette in the United States.

Youth Leader's Views of U.S. Changed by IVLP

¶7. (C) Mulade credited the International Visitor leadership program (IVLP) from which he had recently returned as having changed completely his views of the United States. Before participating in the IVLP, Mulade said he, along with most Niger Delta indigenes, believed that the United States "is behind" Chevron, a U.S. company; and believed the persistent rumors that the United States would bring in the military to defend its interests in the oil of the Niger Delta. As a result, he said, he saw the United States as allied with the

Government of Nigeria in oppressing the Niger Delta people. However, the trip to the United States had opened his eyes, he said, to the United States' desire for peace for all peoples of the world, and he is grateful to have had the opportunity to better understand the United States, and the United Nations, which he also visited.

¶ 8. (C) While in the United States, Mulade met with the Association of Attorney Mediators and with an international mediation center that deals with student-related matters, both located in Dallas, Texas. He hopes to involve both of these groups in training community leaders in the Niger Delta in conflict management techniques. He has already approached Chevron with a proposal.

¶ 9. (C) Comment: We see training like what Dr. LaFayette is conducting as extremely important and something that we should continue to support to help build better grass roots development and appreciation for non-violent means to resolve issues in the Delta. We should also seek to have more U.S. resources for IVLPs that help debunk many of the misperceptions of U.S. interest in the Delta.

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